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ABSTRACT

This paper explores and highlights the importance of social, cultural, and behavioral contexts in the effectiveness of mentoring relationships. A first section looks at growing up in American and the varieties of personal and social development that are found. This section argues against viewing adolescents as similar across the boundaries of location, community, and culture. A following section examines how youth form an identity and find a personal self and a social role. This section notes that in making the separation from the childhood bond to parents, adolescents need the supportive presence of other caring adults. The next section discusses developmental and environmental stresses involved in growing up due to parental difficulties, poverty, minority status, and the absence of agreed-upon standards of child and adolescent well-being. This section details the consequences of these stress factors for adolescents in terms of delinquency, drug abuse, school failure, and other negative outcomes. In a section on social support systems, the roles that community, parents, and schools can play in assisting adolescents to cope with the challenges that face them are explored. A penultimate section reviews models of helping, discussing the effectiveness of some approaches over others. A final section argues for making connections and building a facilitating environment. Eleven references are included. (JB)

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SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND BEHAVIORAL CONTEXTS OF MENTORING

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Mentoring programs, which have become widespread throughout the country, have taken a number of forms. They range from continuous and very intense encounters to occasional, sometimes almost superficial arrangements. Many programs relate mentors to their proteges on a one-to-one basis while others extend their relationships to include groups of youth working either with one mentor or a number of them. Most programs are intergenerational, attempting to provide adult guidance and experience to the next generation, but there are also some that use team peers. Some programs are sharply focused, concentrating on specific needs such as increasing or enhancing educational skills or diverting youngsters from potentially delinquent activities. Other programs see their potential influence on young lives as much broader, seeking to transform character, instill moral values, and direct their proteges toward socially rewarding and fulfilling lives. Yet, while the focuses and specific structural arrangements may differ, all mentoring programs are based on a conception of mentoring as an interpersonal relationship that develops out of a bond or exchange between individuals rather than as a process that has any reality outside that relationship.

One implication of this conception of mentoring is that, despite the classical model of an older person providing guidance and nurturance to a younger one, mentoring, like all interpersonal relationships, is transactional, involving two individuals in an interaction in which there is always some reciprocity and interdependence. It is an exchange relationship rather than simply a form of "giving," involving mutual nurturing and caring and an exchange of resources. While the mentor may be able to contribute more obvious and immediately rewarding resources to the exchange, the protege has much to offer as well. And, just as the rewards of mentoring are shared, so too are the personal costs such as time and the social and emotional misunderstandings or frustrations that can be involved. This means that mentoring should be approached as a developmental relationship, one that looks to social and affective as well as cognitive learning. Thus, it is more than tutoring or imparting a specific set of skills or items of knowledge. Mentoring requires a broader purview of the possibilities and promises of an interchange

in which goals are mutually developed and progress mutually defined. It can and should involve mutual exploration of avenues and resources for development and can involve questions of physical and emotional well-being, identity, and self-esteem.

Finally, mentoring can and does take place in a wide variety of contexts and, like all patterns of human relationships, it is interactive with and affected by its environment. Different communities provide different values and expectations to youngsters. Even within the same community, different contexts such as the home or the school can present different standards or models of behavior. This places a special burden on mentoring programs to understand how the youngsters they work with experience those contextual differences and how their interventions must account for them. Mentoring programs should have as their goal helping their proteges build a sense of personal and social competence. This means that those who design programs must consider how to go about strengthening the social contexts within which mentoring will take place as well as how to facilitate the affiliative process between mentor and protege. Program designers must understand the nature of child and adolescent development, but it is equally important to be informed by what we know about the effects of social and cultural environments on their growth and learning, what problems and risks they may encounter, and with what possible results.

GROWING UP IN AMERICA: VARIETIES OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

We usually picture youth in groups, going to the same stores to buy records, clothes, or hamburgers or just hanging out together. We also tend to think of them as all being alike, sharing the same ideas and values, wanting the same things, and responding to the same needs and pressures. One reason why teenagers seem so similar is that they are all undergoing the same changes, adjusting to new bodies, giving up the freedoms of childhood, learning new roles, experiencing the same uncertainties about what their futures will be like, and wondering if they will fail or succeed.

Actually, youngsters are as different from each other as adults are. Some of the differences result from biological predispositions and characteristics such as gender or

health status, or from unique experiences such as the death of a parent or some other traumatic event. But diversity also results from the differences they experience in the environments that shape their lives. Young people grow up in poverty or affluence or some place in between, come from broken or intact families, attend good or bad schools, and can encounter very different role models in their communities. These differences are part of what produces both the diversity and the uniqueness of human personalities. They also account for very different developmental trajectories in growing up with very different social and personal advantages or disadvantages resulting in risk factors that can significantly affect the life course.

While there has been a long-standing debate about the relative importance of nature and nurture, most of us now understand that neither has an exclusive or deterministic role in development and that they are interdependent. Biological problems such as physical handicaps and health hazards and stresses can have a deterrent effect on development. Similarly, children are born with or without certain talents or aptitudes and with differing levels of ability. Yet few of these handicaps or deficiencies are intractable or insurmountable if adults intervene with sufficient insight and sensitivity to each child's uniqueness and promise. Youngsters' internal resources are nurtured or stifled by the opportunities available to them and by the presence or absence of adults who can help them find the resources they lack or are unable to find for themselves.

Where do adolescents encounter the peers and adults who can influence their lives and help shape who and what they will become? Obviously the answer is to be found in where and how young people spend their time. Growing up in an affluent suburb can expose a young person to very different values, resources, expectations and adult role models than those available in an urban, inner-city area. No matter how disorganized and barren a community may seem, there are certain relevant social contexts and sociocultural milieus that make social life work. People, both peers and adults and the groups they form, empower these environments that teach and nurture but can also stifle achievement, waste or misuse abilities and talents, or hinder social growth and development.

The primary social context in which all of us begin life is the family. The head start the family has in children's lives gives it an enormous influence that can last throughout life. Despite their universality, however, families differ in structure, in their stability, in the amount and quality of the time they can spend together, their ability to buffer young lives against stress both within the family and the outside world, and in the nurturance, affection and trust they can or do provide. The structure and character of families is also changing. They are smaller than in the past, are more likely to have both parents working outside the home, to be single-parent maintained, and to be "blended" when remarried parents bring their children from previous marriages into the new family. The new waves of immigrant and refugee families add more cultural diversity but also pose difficulties for youngsters who must make adjustments to a new culture and sometimes to conflicting values as well. Homelessness and its sometimes devastating effects on family life and child and adolescent development is yet another example of the difficulty many young people are now having in finding a stable and secure social group.

The peer group also plays a major role in social development. The behavior-setting social network of the peer group grows in importance when children go off to school and move into greater contact with the community outside the family. Much has been made of the negative effects of peer groups in isolating youth from adult values and insulating them against acceptance of the community's expectations and standards. Peer groups do exert powerful influences on their members, particularly in terms of pressing for conformity, often causing anxiety and stress for children as well as for parents and other caretaking adults. Peer groups, however, grow out of and continue to be related to adult institutions such as the family, the school, the neighborhood, and the workplace. Although they provide a locus for peer interaction and permit group as well as individual questioning of adult values and standards, very few adolescents can or ever do completely reject the adult world and its standards and goals. Adolescents in particular communities are usually much more similar in their value orientations to their parents and other local adults than they are to their peers in other, dissimilar communities. Adolescents also turn to these adults for information, validation, and guidance about the future. Most often it is to parents or relatives or neighbors or the

parents of friends. It can also, however, be to any adult who is willing and able to provide the resources and support needed to find an identity and social competence within some mutually valued social world.

HOW YOUTH FORM AN IDENTITY AND FIND A PERSONAL SELF AND SOCIAL ROLE.

Discovering and helping to determine who and what you will be is a major task of growing up and a source of both satisfaction and frustration for many youngsters. To some extent this involves the emergence or unfolding of biological changes. Some of these changes such as accelerated bodily growth and developing sexuality are visible, while others such as more abstract thinking and reasoning abilities are less directly observable. The physical and intellectual changes that come with adolescence are harbingers of adult status and roles but they do not come evenly or on equal schedules for all young people. This variability in growth rates and development can produce considerable anxiety and frustration for early or late maturing youth with important implications for self image and esteem. But these changes do not take place in a vacuum; they occur within the context of the social worlds of families, schools, peer groups, and the other environments of the community.

Developmental change and its variability provide a fertile ground for conflicts, but not all conflicts are the result of biological and social maturation or grow out of inner turmoil. Lack of stability in the social worlds that structure and empower maturation such as differences or conflicts between the world views of the two dominant social worlds of the family and the peer group can also make for confusion and conflict. Despite their growing sense of mastery over their own perceptions, young people experience the world through their interaction with others and the values presented to them in the social settings within which they participate. New and tentative relationships to an expanding world of social contexts, the roles they project, their changing demands, and the resources for social competence they offer lead youth to question their identity. These questions, and the sources and resources for satisfactory and productive answers,

come in response to a number of developmental demands for incorporating an integrated sense of self.

One of the most important demands is to transform the child's dependent attachment to the family into a new interdependence with peers and adults outside the family. This involves a process of separation and disengagement and finding new attachments to others. It also, however, means finding a new autonomy of self from others, taking the initiative and seeking evidence, making decisions, and taking responsibility for those decisions. These tentative movements into an autonomous sense of self should also lead to a growing awareness of self reliance, and an appreciation of the rewards and benefits of achievement. Youth become more aware of their own personal characteristics, interests, abilities, motivations, and competencies--or are troubled by the lack of them. They also learn that there are opportunities offered or denied for being successful and they come to link these with future lives and possibilities.

All of this exploration requires the opportunity to experience and participate in the variety of social and creative worlds that can enliven and enrich life. Young people need a chance to test their abilities and skills, have them evaluated, pursue their improvement, and develop a sense of self-reliance and accountability. Their experience and participation must, if it is to be meaningful in their lives, be continuous and reinforcing, not occasional and disparate. Meaningful participation also means the opportunity to interact with a variety of peers and adults, individuals and groups who express the care and offer the intimacy that allows tentative movement and mistakes, but reinforces success and achievement. Over time individuals come to identify with these interactive settings and to accept and adopt the conventions, rules, attitudes and behaviors they display. They also come to fix their self-image within the possible selves they see or imagine from these interactions.

What we believe we can become is also affected by what others tell us or show us is possible. Youth help to shape the environments within which their transformation takes place, but they continue to seek help and guidance from others. While they are seeking autonomy and self-discovery, they are also engaged in a search for structure in their lives, a set of believable and attainable expectations and standards from the social

contexts of their communities. If the values espoused by the different sectors of their community are at odds, if the standards and expectations are unclear or inconsistent, youth are abandoned to their own devices for rationalizing them.

These external worlds, and the objects and the relationships they model, as well as their socio-emotional ambience, are internalized as adolescents experience them and become part of their internal world. With developing cognitive and reasoning skills, youth come to identify with the roles and role behaviors represented in the patterns of social relationship these external worlds model. Over time these roles become source material for the personal narratives that script their identity formation. How the various social environments that structure a youngster's development are integrated, in terms of both continuity and congruence, can influence both identity and the sense of fate control that youth experience growing up in that environment. In a community where the various social institutions are at odds, where families feel that the school system devalues their children and fails to educate them while the school complains that parents do not properly prepare or motivate their young, where the workplace proclaims that it cannot hire these youth who are neither motivated by their family background nor made literate by their schooling, this conflict is clearly evident in identity conflict and the absence of a personal sense of fate control. In communities where the social institutions work together, where youngsters move easily from one social setting to another, and where there is an articulated set of standards and expectations, identity conflicts are minimized and youth have a more stable platform on which to project future roles and lives.

While stability is important in young lives, growing up is necessarily a series of transitions from infant to child, from child to adolescent, and then into various stages of adulthood. Adolescence is notoriously a period of uncertainty as new objects, new experiences, and new ideas compete for incorporation into an emerging and expanding self. As part of this process the teenager projects his or her own uncertainty into the outer world and then retrieves and internalizes a perceived or construed reality. One essential ingredient for stability in the adolescent separation from the largely parentally sanctioned reality of childhood to the reality of the larger community of adolescence, is the supportive presence of caring adults. By offering them the security of an expectable

and structured environment, adult caretakers can represent, model, and introduce youngsters to the new adult worlds they must enter in search of a personally satisfying and socially sanctioned identity.

AT RISK IN AMERICA: DEVELOPMENTAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES IN GROWING UP.

These complex and demanding requirements for social and individual development challenge youth and society and, like all challenges, involve some risks. All youngsters are at-risk at some time. Health hazards, accidents, uncaring parents or uninspired teachers, the temptations of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, too-early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and the anguish of loneliness can plague all teenagers regardless of family background or where they live. But growing up entails greater risks for some than for others and, in some cases, exposure to risk factors that most other youth never encounter. Poverty, for example, compounds and exacerbates the risks that all young people face. Youngsters from racial or ethnic minorities and recent immigrants and refugees often must contend not only with all of the risks that attend poverty but also prejudice, bias, and differential access to opportunity structures, increasing their risks of failure in life. For poor and minority youngsters, risk factors tend to be multiple in number and have greater impact because of the absence of social supports to mitigate them. Despite all of the risks, most youngsters in each of these groupings make it through adolescence without significant scars and settle into a productive and fulfilling life course. Yet many do not and the more one is at-risk, the greater the chances of failure and the more urgent it is that we offer the care, help, and support they need to face and overcome the risks and have an equal chance at success.

The question of the number of America's youth who are at risk is confounded by the absence of any agreed-upon standards of child and adolescent well-being and by differing social views of who is and who is not at risk of what physical or social malady. The Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development estimates that about 7 million, or one out every four of the estimated 28 million youngsters between the ages of 10 and 17 in America, is in serious

jeopardy from multiple risks such as school failure, substance abuse, or early and unprotected intercourse. They also estimate that another 7 million may be at moderate risk from substance abuse and early intercourse, so that about half of all youth in the country are at serious or moderate risk (Dryfoos, 1990). The Fordham Institute tracked trends in child abuse, poverty, drug abuse, infant mortality, teenage suicide, and dropping out of school and reported a dramatic decline of almost 50% in the social well-being of children and youth in the 1970's and 1980's (Jennings, 1989). But, while these statistics may tell us about the possible dimensions of the problem, being at risk is an individual vulnerability to environmental risk factors and can be very different depending on how and where one lives and what social supports from family, friends and adult caretakers are available.

Families orient youngsters to an ever expanding circle of other contexts reaching out into the community and on into society. The family's role is one of mediating between the child and that larger social reality, but it is inevitably influenced by those same social environments. The family itself can produce some risk factors for its children. Physical and sexual abuse of children by parents or by siblings as well as the devaluation of education and conventional behavior by some families are well-known examples. Parental ignorance or inattention to health hazards, nutrition, and safety precautions in areas ranging from sexual behavior to automobile use and street behavior can place youngsters at greater risk. Thus, while families should serve as buffers against risks, they can become part of the risk-producing environment as well. Youngsters themselves are aware of the dangers they may face at home, and runaways most frequently speak of excessive discipline and violence, sexual and physical abuse or harassments, and the deprivation of love and care as the reasons for fleeing their families. Many teenage runaways who become prostitutes have been victims of incest and the feeling that sexual favors demanded by fathers are an early and compelling example of a means of paying for love and care (Ianni, 1989). Similarly, many teenage females who become pregnant explain that their baby represents something they can love, and that they gain a status as a mother, which offers them the attention, acclaim, and affection that was denied them as someone's child or student.

Families also see their children born into particular cultural milieus, social classes, communities and their neighborhoods and, as a result, into clearly delineated and circumscribed social networks. Most of the risks to which children can be exposed within their families are more frequent and more potent when the family is imperiled by living in poverty and minority status. Teenage girls living in poverty, for example, are much more likely to become mothers than their more affluent peers, and youth from poverty backgrounds have a significantly higher rate of unemployment and tend to have lower earnings when they are employed. This suggests more than just the weakness of family buffers against risk factors or the deprivation that results from the poverty of family resources for building coping skills for youth. It means that youth see fewer conventional role models and less evidence that effort and determination can lead to accomplishment. They have access only to constricted class networks, which reduces their chances of job and career mobility, inhibits aspirations, and increases their feelings of social isolation. In such social environments, the other social institutions that should work with the family are equally faulted in their willingness or ability to provide a secure base to grow, and they combine to provide a risk-filled rather than care-rich environment for their young people.

Schools, too, should be buffers. While there are some dramatic examples of ghetto schools that make an exemplary education available and produce impressive results, schools in poverty areas, both urban and rural, tend to be the poorest and weakest schools. All of the indicators of school success--various standardized tests, reading levels, rates of retention of one-or-more years in grades, absenteeism and alienation, and teachers' and students' expressions of satisfaction with the learning that is taking place--reflect unfavorably on schools in poor areas as contrasted with more affluent ones. These schools and the streets surrounding them are also less-safe havens for learners than more affluent schools and frequently their larger size and greater diversity lead to increased anomie and alienation. Dropout rates for all youth are unacceptably high but even this risk factor reflects the poor quality of schools for the disadvantaged, and the rates for Hispanic-American and African-Americans living in poverty is far higher than is true for other ethnic and income groups. Dropouts are also

much more likely to become involved in delinquency or to enter the informal and underground economy. Efforts to reform education have most often focused on in-school improvement. Now, however, it is becoming increasingly obvious that not only do schools need strong community support, but that until we improve communities, we will continue to get the schools we have earned. Educational psychologist Herbert Walberg, for example, after reviewing all of the research on student achievement concludes that environmental factors "hold the best hope for increasing educational productivity" (Walberg, 1984).

There has been some disagreement among delinquency experts on what leads youngsters to become delinquent and how to deal with it. One long-standing approach is to see delinquent youth as a subculture within the deviant communities of the country, with equally deviant values and mores, which their young people learn and respond to as they grow. Another approach sees it as the result of inadequate or ineffective social controls and poor socialization. The deviant sub-culture approach places the onus on the community for bringing up its young with a distorted or deviant set of values, while social control theorists fault communities for improper socialization that leads young people to nonconformity with any set of values or norms. What is striking is not so much the difference between these approaches, but the emphasis on environmental risk factors rather than individual maladjustment or failure.

The always dangerous and often violent environments in which impoverished and deprived youngsters find themselves expose youngsters to deviant and nonconforming social networks of peers and adults, which can lead to greater risk of exposure to illicit activities. Life chances are related to the life style of the social environment in which teenagers live. While white youths have three times as many chances of being killed in a motor vehicle accident than do minority youth, the risk of death by homicide is four times as great for the minority youth. White males are also six times more likely to commit suicide than are African-American females. Problems of drug abuse also differ according to residence in urban or suburban settings and socioeconomic status. Despite an overall decline in drug use, it still presents a major risk factor, which again is greater for those in poverty. Urban inner-city youngsters are not only the unfortunate

beneficiaries of the greater availability of drugs, they also tend to use "harder" and more destructive drugs than their suburban or rural peers. The reasons they give for abusing drugs also differ. Suburban youth attribute their drug use to curiosity, peer pressure, and thrill seeking while inner-city youth speak much more ominously of grinding poverty, the powerlessness that accompanies unemployability, and alienation from a system that many of them see as indifferent to or even implicated in the easy availability of drugs in their areas (Ianni, 1983).

Whether or not peer group influence is an important risk factor in teenage drug abuse, there are peer groups in many communities which, in isolation from adult supervision, form more-or-less-structured disruptive and deviant groups and become involved in antisocial and illegal behavior such as vandalism, drug and alcohol use and abuse, and shoplifting. The most structured and best known of these are the urban fighting gangs of males and, increasingly, their female auxiliaries, who exhibit and value the impulsive aggression and hostility that have sometimes made us wary and even fearful of youth in American society. Such gangs are built into the texture of their neighborhoods whose turf they often protect. When one listens to these youth they often tell of having to distance themselves from home environments lacking even the most rudimentary family structure to support a parent-child relationship. They frequently come from single-parent homes where the mother is unable to maintain adequate behavioral controls, or if there is an adult male present , the youth is in rebellion against him, not infrequently because of seeing his mother abused or degraded. Fleeing or being pushed out into the streets, they seek out the structure and the often severe strictures of the gang, where fidelity is to the gang and not to home or school. If neither the home nor the school provide the means of achieving an identity that allows some minimal sense of self-worth, the gang does and usually with more excitement and immediate gratification.

While each of these risk factors can be injurious to development and destructive to social competence and an integrated and rewarding identity, the problem for those at greatest risk is that the factors are often interconnected, combining and reinforcing each other with devastating effects on the life course. Substance abuse and school failure can

lead to early pregnancy for females and to lives on the fringes of employability and legitimate behavior for males. And even when we manage to reduce the risks in one area, lack of progress in another may make that success seem meaningless. Despite the fact that targeted programs have had a visible effect in reducing the incidence of dropping out among African-American males, the unemployment rate among African-American high school graduates is one-fifth higher than the rate for white high school dropouts (Wetzel, 1987).

COPING, CARING, HELPING, AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

Despite the stark tragedy behind these perspectives on risk-filled social environments, most youngsters, including those burdened by poverty or inequality, manage to find on their own the resources for coping with the jeopardy of developmental and environmental stresses. Youth who experience culturally, socially, and economically impoverished lives can still manage to succeed. They can overcome early educational deficits, little or no commitment to schooling by their parents, the absence of positive role models, association with peers who derogate conventional behavior, and any or indeed all of the risk factors they must face. But these are individual coping efforts, involving a resilience to hardship and exceptional intrinsic motivation on the part of the individual youngster, a family that values the child and can offer the comfort of caring, a teacher or a school dedicated to success, or some fortuitous combination of all of these.

One dimension of differentiation in the coping skills of youngsters is their relative vulnerability to the realities of being at-risk. Risks are viewed differently by different youngsters in the same environment. Risk can be viewed as a challenge or it can be experienced as a self-defeating, personal disaster. It can be approached as a barrier or a struggle to be overcome, or with resignation and defeat. Some youngsters possess the inner strength and resources to take on these individual and collective human struggles alone. Such youngsters, seemingly "invulnerable children" as they have come to be called, have been discovered in a wide variety of adverse or high-risk environments ranging from extreme poverty to schizophrenic and drug- and alcohol-abusing families. Some scientists see them as having an "inner resilience" that allows them to succeed where all of the

odds suggest the certainty of failure (Anthony & Cohler, 1987). But others insist that there is also usually someone who cares, a family member or teacher to whom the youngster can turn for social support, or a church or social agency that provides believable adult caretakers (Ianni, 1989). Ideally both intrinsic motivation and the availability of caring, helping, and modeling adults work together to make this a collective struggle rather than a lonely battle in a chaotic and hostile world.

Where do youngsters go when they are puzzled or troubled about getting to know themselves or negotiating their social environments? Although teenagers turn to peers for advice on questions of current styles or tastes, when it is a question of important present or future life crises or options, they look to adults for answers (Ianni, 1989). Parents and kinship-based relationships continue to be the most important source of social support and care for youngsters regardless of residence or socioeconomic status, but other adults are also valued. While we can start with the assumption that all youngsters crave and need help, not all can or will ask for it. Some youngsters learn to ask for help because they live in a help-rich environment where a large number of adults have the resources and the involvement to offer it. Some places make it easy to ask for help and seek care while others make it difficult, humiliating, or even potentially dangerous. And the greater the risk factors in the lives of youths, the less experience they have in asking for help or even admitting that they need it. This suggests that we must consciously prepare youngsters to ask for help and reduce the anxiety and hazards involved in asking for it. It also means, however, that adults have to make known, to advertise and announce their willingness and resources for offering help if it is asked for and that it will be given willingly and non-judgmentally. There are a number of important things we know about giving and receiving help and how this relates to caring and support for youth.

Caring and helping are not simply a matter of heart or of conscience. There are personal and interactional characteristics that make for good care-givers and that young care-seekers look for in adults. Youth turn to adults because they appreciate the experience and knowledge they have and continue to relate to them only to the extent that they feel they are learning and benefiting from the relationship. This means that the

first step in helping youngsters must be a mutual assessment of what the help-seeker is looking for and what the help-giver has to offer. This is essentially a process of negotiation and involves empathy, reciprocity, and the ability of the help-seeker to identify with the potential giver. Youngsters do find it easier to identify with adults who are like them in gender and ethnicity and even more so in language just as all of us are more likely to turn to family, friends, neighbors or others with whom we feel some identification. But help-seeking is a response to a certain threshold of awareness that one needs help but cannot find it within oneself or current resources. In such cases, particularly in the absence of kin-based supportive networks, they are most likely to bond with adults they think have the knowledge and understanding they seek, conditioned by what they think the giver will feel towards them and what obligations and indebtedness are involved.

Once the relationship is established it must go through a process of building mutual trust and commitment. There are certain recognized attributes of the relationship that the help and care giver should consider. Caring and helping require involvement and attachment. Youngsters often mention the importance of attention, or interdependent attachment based on their perception of physical responses such as "looking at you when they are talking to you," "smiling and being happy when they see me," or "showing they don't care by leaning away from you or avoiding eye contact." Caring and helping also take time. Nothing seems to signal attachment and caring for youngsters so much as the helper's willingness to give time on a regular and predictable basis. One of the interesting pieces of folk wisdom among mental health professionals is that patients will usually continue to come so long as there is a scheduled next appointment. Youngsters, particularly those who must come to the meeting place through unsafe and potentially violent streets, need to be assured of safety and security once they arrive. This means more than physical safety; it also depends on an assurance that the adult caretakers care about them as individuals.

Mutuality and interdependence should characterize the relationship. Providing opportunities for sharing can be important also. Most youngsters want to be needed and valued, and one of the important ways for adults to show this is by accepting what

youngsters have to offer graciously but not condescendingly. The relationship between the care-giver and the help-seeker should be congruent with the needs of both and provide continuity in a context that models the type of relationship both are trying to build. The character of the relationships between two parents, between teachers, or between a youthworker or volunteer and his or her supervisor or colleagues, all model both the content and the process of learning to care and be cared for by the youth who view these relationships. Caring behavior and attitudes can also be modeled by adult helpers proactively through initiation of behavior or reactively in the way in which they respond to initiated behavior from those they are helping.

MODELS OF HELPING.

The late Philip Brickman and his associates have examined the ambience of various models of helping and its effects on the relationships between those giving and those receiving help (Brickman et al, 1982). They make a distinction between assessing who is to "blame" for creating the problem that requires help and who bears the responsibility for correcting the problem. One model takes the moralistic approach that he who creates the problem is responsible for its solution. We hear this in childhood as "You made this mess, you clean it up " and reflect it in later life in "It's my problem, I'll take care of it!" If one fails to find a solution, he or she lacks the proper motivation or is "lazy". A "compensatory model" assumes that while one is not responsible for the problem, he or she *is* responsible for the solution. Here, they point out, the potential deficiency is that youth who always see themselves as responsible for solving problems they did not create can develop a negative or even paranoid view of their environment. In the "medical model" the person helped is neither responsible for the problem nor capable of solving it. The dependence this creates in the helped, and the distance it places between helper and helped is clear. Finally, there is an "enlightenment model" in which individuals are seen as being responsible for their own problems but unwilling or incapable of solving them without some external source of discipline. A basic tenet of this approach, as exemplified in programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, is that the

person needing help is "out of control" and needs to be enlightened as to the nature and reality of the problem.

These models are of more than academic or clinical interest because they demonstrate that caring and helping take place in developmentally interactive real life situations. They also show that we must be aware of how we are relating to those being helped and offer some practical advice on anticipating the possible effects of our help on those being helped. Some of the things we want to teach youngsters, like basic physical safety or health-hazard avoidance, may best be approached with the medical model, which not only holds the person being helped safe-harmless but can be potent medicine for training youth to take care of their bodies. The medical model is not the best approach, however, to teach developing skills or growth-related behaviors, since it denies youth the opportunity to test and develop the necessary skills. The compensatory model can be a caring and generous way of forgiving the absence of awareness or comprehension in youngsters from deprived backgrounds, or it can be a paternalistic disregard of the richness of different cultural heritages. Different models can be age-appropriate in one case and not in others, as anyone trying to use the moral model with older adolescents quickly discovers. What is most important is to learn to fit what we hope to be of benefit to young people into an appropriate model and to be willing to adjust and adapt when we find that we are not getting through.

Some youngsters are attractive in some way to some individual caretaker or helper in some situations and others are not. This places a special burden on volunteer help-givers because they may not find all of those who seek help equally attractive. It is tempting to say that one should ignore these interpersonal preferences and realize that there is beauty in us all, but studies indicate that the clinical judgment of mental and physical health professionals is no less influenced by interpersonal preferences. Being aware of and sensitive to the potential problem, and continuing self-evaluation, seems to be the most helpful way of dealing with it.

Sooner or later, it becomes necessary to terminate relationships even when they have been productive and rewarding to both the partners in the exchange of caring. It is at this point that the transportability of what has been exchanged between giver and

receiver becomes an issue. Such leave takings can be sad, even painful occasions, but they can also signal both the end of one relationship and the beginning of another. To some extent this can be dealt with by reassurances that the care-giver will continue to care and even remain available in the future, but creating what can be an overdependence can be harmful as well as illusory. What can each of the parties take with them? Part of this question is answered by the degree to which the person being helped has been able to internalize the visions, the insights and the new social realities experienced in the relationship. Just as important, however, is the building of new relationships and helping to build a facilitating environment within which youth can find constructive interdependence.

MAKING CONNECTIONS AND BUILDING A FACILITATING ENVIRONMENT.

Donald Winnicott, the late British psychoanalyst, located social and cultural development in the space between individual children and their environments--"an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute" (Winnicott, 1967). He proposed that our responsibility as adults is to foster a sense of care in children by learning to tolerate their unknowing frustration and aggressive seeking for satisfaction. Parental and later caretaking adults must, he said, create a "holding environment," an embracing and supportive presence and availability that provides the time to learn to trust that they will be there for him or her. The other crucial factor is that the child must be given "the opportunity to contribute," to work on and help to accomplish that transitional and facilitating environment for himself or herself (Winnicott, 1963).

Communities differ in how they structure and empower the social environments of development for youth. The dynamics of the relationships among institutions can be more important than the individual contribution of the family, the school, peer groups or voluntary agencies. There is abundant evidence that competing or conflicting behavioral and social expectations and standards rather than youthful rebellion, insensitivity, or inexperience are the background for inconsistent norms and the seeming disparity between what adults want for and from youth and what they receive or think they are

getting. It is critical that youngsters hear the same messages from all of the adult-sanctioned institutions in their developmental environment. This demands a normative system with clear, consistent, structured, and openly expressed social and behavioral expectations as well as the standards to be used in meeting those expectations. Particularly problematic are environments in which adherence to one set of expectations promulgated by some adult authority system (the family, for example) is viewed as an infraction against those of another (the peer group or the school).

In addition to the social buffering that adult helpers and caretakers can provide as individuals, it is necessary to attempt to construct or reconstruct the missing infrastructure in youngsters' lives. This requires dealing with the multiple deficits and multiple risks with a multidimensional and integrated approach rather than a number of unrelated and sometimes competing attempts by different adults. The purpose of this infrastructure is not just to provide a safety net; it means providing a sense of connectedness with "something larger than me." Social network development, increasing the interaction possibilities in the developmental environment by expanding one's social contacts, is an important preparatory step in helping the youth back into the social environment that contributed so much to his or her need for help. Expanding contacts involves promoting diversity in relationships, increasing contact with a variety of caretaking adults, and building relationships between and among the various helping caretakers in the youngster's environment. It also involves linking them to the wide range of community supports that should be available to them. Joan Wynn and her associates have identified these as (1) opportunities to participate in organized, on-going groups, (2) avenues for contributing to the well-being of others, (3) sources of personal support, and (4) access to the use of community facilities and events including museums, libraries, parks, civic events and celebrations (Wynn et al., 1988).

Each generation tends to see itself as possessing the accumulated wisdom and vision that is essential to their children and, when we become grandparents, to our children's children. We are reluctant to accept that the risks our children face are not all of their own making. They did not invent drugs or alcohol and how to abuse them; they learned about them from us. Adolescent sexuality has changed much more as a result of

a general relaxation of adult sexual taboos than of any change in teenage behavior, and the specter of AIDS did not originate among teenagers but has been another of the hazards they have acquired from us. Other risks such as delinquency and unemployment follow similar demographic and cyclical patterns among youth as they do among adults. And some, such as poor nutritional and other health habits, are first learned at home. Adults have more to offer young people than this. They can and do seek to mediate between these same youngsters and the risks we have unleashed on them. There are many opportunities for adult-youth interaction within communities, and each opportunity should be seized to recast risks to be feared into challenges to be faced and see to it that no youngster need face them alone.

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